

Laura Johnson
Junior Tutorial in English
Fall 2012

The Gothic Tradition

Half-empty castles, victimized women, supernatural apparitions, sinister doppelgangers, incest, violence, vampirism, terror, horror, and the nightmare. The word “gothic” conjures a variety of associations, from 21st century vampires and werewolves to 18th century crumbling castles and distressed maidens. For two hundred and fifty years, gothic images and stories have captivated our collective imagination. Why? What draws us to these tales of supernatural happenings, and why do we experience such pleasure in the terrifying episodes they recount?

In this course, we will read a large range of Gothic texts, from America, England and Germany, from the 18th through the 20th century, from novels to images and films. In surveying this broad field of literature, we aim both to understand the rich diversity of the genre and to define what makes it resonate so much with readers. To do so, we will develop a critical vocabulary about the Gothic using secondary sources, introducing such concepts as the uncanny, terror and horror, the abject, the sublime and the fantastic. Some of the readings (primary and critical) will be difficult, but as we proceed through the semester, we’ll have increasingly sophisticated ways to think about the genre and about the generic transformations that have occurred over time.

The Gothic tradition is a body of literature fundamentally concerned with the boundaries between past and present, reality and the supernatural, morality and immorality, guilt and victimization, and reason and faith or superstition. We project our cultural anxieties onto monsters and doubles of our own creation, and we read these Gothic stories of terror and horror in part because they resonate with some curiosity or impulse inside ourselves. Gothic literature, too, is preeminently concerned with the past, both as an execrable site of ignorant superstitions and as an enviable time of simplicity and belief. With this in mind, as we set out to study the Gothic tradition from its beginnings, we should be conscious of the mixed superiority and nostalgia that we feel in reaching back to the origins of the Gothic.

Requirements:

Participation (30%): Attendance and participation in weekly discussions. Brief weekly response papers due the day before class.

Presentations (15%): Two presentations, one during a normal reading week and one during week 12 on a contemporary Gothic text of your choosing.

Preliminary Writing Assignments (25%):

Junior Paper Proposal: A two-page proposal, due Week 7 in class

Annotated Bibliography: Substantial bibliography due Week 12 in class

Drafts of Junior Paper: Two drafts, a first draft (read by Laura) due Week 11 and a second draft (read by peers and Laura) due Week 13 in class.

Junior Paper (30%): A 20-25 page research paper

Schedule: (Exact readings may be altered to fit student interests)

Week 1: Introduction to the Gothic

Week 2: The Historical Fragment and the Origins of the Gothic

Primary Text: Horace Walpole, *The Castle of Otronto* (1764)
Critical Text: John Aikin and Anna Laetitia Aikin “On the Pleasure Derived from Objects of Terror with Sir Bertrand, A Fragment” (1773)
Susan Sontag, “Notes on Camp” (1964)

Week 3: Horror and *The Monk*

Primary Text: Matthew Lewis, *The Monk* (1796), Volumes I & II
Secondary Text: Contemporary reviews of *The Monk*

Week 4: The Abject

Primary Text: Matthew Lewis, *The Monk* (1796), Volume III
Critical Text: Julia Kristeva, “Approaching Abjection” from *The Powers of Horror* (1982) – NOTE: this is a very difficult reading – we’ll spend much of class discussing it.

Week 5: The Anti-Gothic

Primary Texts: Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey* (1817)
Ann Radcliffe, excerpts from *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794)
Critical Text: Tanya Modleski, “The Female Uncanny,” from *Loving With a Vengeance* (1982)

Week 6: Library Visit & Research Workshop

Week 7: The Uncanny

(Junior Paper Proposals due – meet with Laura individually to discuss)
Primary Texts: E.T.A. Hoffmann, “The Sandman” (1817)
Critical Text: Sigmund Freud, “The Uncanny” (1919)

Week 8: Gothic Birth

Primary Texts: Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818)
Critical Text: Ellen Moers, “Female Gothic: The Monster’s Mother” (1976)

Week 9: Vampiric Sexuality

Primary Text: Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (1897)
Critical Text: Christopher Craft “‘Kiss me with Those Red Lips’: Gender and Inversion in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*” (1984)

Week 10: Gothic Monsters & the Visual Realm

Primary Text: F.W. Murnau, *Nosferatu* (1922)
Wiene, Robert, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920)
Critical Text: Tvetan Todorov, excerpt from *The Fantastic* (1973)

Week 11: Southern Gothic (1st paper drafts due in class)

Primary Texts: William Faulkner, "A Rose for Emily" (1930)
William Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom* (1937)

Critical Text: Excerpt from Teresa Goddu, *Gothic America* (1997)

Week 12: Contemporary Gothic (Annotated Bibliography Due)

Present to the class on a contemporary text of your choosing. Options include anything from Angela Carter's feminist masterpiece *The Bloody Chamber* (1973), to Anne Rice's horror classic *Interview with a Vampire* (1973), to Stephanie Meyer's hugely popular *Twilight* series.

Week 13: Draft Workshop (2nd drafts due earlier in the week)

Read and critique classmates' drafts in class.